NORTH Bi NORTHWEST

Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services

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PRIDE 2004

Gay Pride in Poland

By Sidney

"You fucking fags!" they shouted at us in Polish. They wanted us to die. I could tell by the look in their eyes. They didn't have to use epithets; their body language was enough to convey their hatred. Their middle fingers were extended in the air at us, hundreds of them, extended at us. It was Poland's first gay-pride march and I was there, history-in-the-making. Why is it that history is history when it's violent and hateful? Why can't history be a lovely, pastoral scene in a meadow somewhere?

History isn't beautiful, though. It's mean. It's violent. It's scary. If history reflects ideology, then this certainly was a slice of it. It demonstrated that just beneath the surface, beneath the polite faces, the passive smiles, the please's and thank you's, there's hate. It reminded me that human beings are motivated first and foremost by their egos, by their ache for identity.

Thankfully I couldn't understand the epithets at the time. This was my first gay-pride march, after all, and I had no idea what I was in for. I've been told that in Seattle gay pride is normally met with non-violent demonstrations. Sure, the neo-Nazis show up, they shout, their cruelty lingers about, but they don't throw bricks. They don't throw rocks. They don't throw eggs. Or if they do, certainly not all three at once. I felt like they had no right to shout those epithets at me, at us, at my family of like-minded queers, at people just wanting to love other people. We didn't do that to them. We didn't hate them for hating us. Why did they hate us so much?

Activists from all around the world came to participate. Side-by side we gathered our signs and set out for the street, connected not only by our queerness, but by our ideologies and politics. We all seemed to speak an unspoken common language. We seemed to understand each other without ever having met. Every smile was matched with smile, every wink with a wink.

Before the march began I selected a sign from a large stack that had been prepared in advance. All of them were written in Polish, so I had no idea which one to choose. I decided to have faith in their messages. I had to trust that they weren't provocative; that the sign I chose wouldn't anger someone into attacking me. Eventually I asked someone who I heard speaking English what my sign read. On one side it read 'we are all homos' and on the other side 'sapiens,' suggesting that we are all human beings, emphasizing our universality despite our ideological differences.

KAZDY
Z NAS
JEST HOMO
GEJE

During the march I spoke with a lesbian woman from Spain, her partner walking by her side, who said that in order for the demonstration to be legal an official document from the local municipal had to be signed by those anticipating to participate in it. Although only four people signed the document a few days before the march, by the time it began a few thousand had joined. In such a patriarchal society it would have meant social suicide to put your name on such a document, to admit your queerness.

As the march progressed it seemed like the crowd grew exponentially every minute, and as the crowd grew so did their emotions. The opposition grew hostile, seemingly tormented by their hate. The more aggressive they got the more solidified we felt and the more our ideologies seemed legitimate. I kept asking myself why they hated us so much. Just as we felt solidified by our cause, so did they by theirs. We all gained identity in cohesion, in collaboration.

The march ensued. As I was walking a man ran up to me from behind and violently snatched the sign from my hand. I turned

...Continued on page 4

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We welcome submissions from women and men that concern feminism, politics, sexuality, or anything of interest to bisexual women. Help define our culture! Share your histories, anger, pleasure, energy. Send us your essays, poetry, photographs, drawings, book reviews, short stories, interviews, media reports, rants, cartoons, erotica, journals, theory, conversations and letters. You're important to us and what you have to say is important to everyone.

We accept submissions on disk with hard copy (PC), typed, legibly handwritten copy or e-mail (sbwn@hotmail.com). If you send us something and we publish it, you get a free issue. Let us know what pseudonym you use, if you do not want to publish under your everyday name.

Views expressed in *North Bi Northwest* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SBWN. Inclusion in this publication does not indicate the author's sexual orientation.

Deadline for submissions to the new issue: October 22, 2004.

SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of self-identified women from diverse backgrounds working to create a feminist bisexual support network. We promote, in both the heterosexual world, and in the lesbian/gay community, the understanding and acceptance of bisexuality as one of many valid sexual identities.

We regard ourselves as part of the community united against heterosexism and homophobia. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political, or economic coercion. The discriminations we face based on our gender and our sexuality are not the only forms of oppression. We recognize that oppression is non-hierarchical and that none of us is free until all of us are free. We have invested ourselves in the feminist struggle to transform our culture into one free of all forms of bigotry, hatred, and exploitation.

We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexual orientation and identity. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. We are exclusively a women's group in order to create a safe space for women's expression and leadership. We come together to affirm ourselves and our choices.

North Bi Northwest

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SBWN can always use volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. Give us a call or talk to a facilitator at a meeting.

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From the Editor...

We had a great presence at Pride this year. Our marching contingent started out small but swelled to 28 people about half way through the march and included men and children. We shared a booth under the GCSS umbrella with several other groups. We kept the SBWN table staffed both days. We didn't earn as much money this year without the body painting we usually do but we did sell a bunch of buttons, some t-shirts and other small stuff.

Hope you all had fun at Pride this year. You can read about my personal experience elsewhere in this issue. There are three accounts of Seattle Pride experiences as well as some photographs.

We also have an article about a first Pride march in Poland attended by one of our members and some pictures from that. And some articles about being Bi in Europe from Lisa who visited there recently.

I've included the second part of my own article on activism and hope to have part three ready for the next issue. Writing about my own activism experiences over the years has been a wonderful journey for me. As I write I continue to come up with more incidents of activism so the article keeps getting longer and longer.

Marriage for same sex couples is still legal in Massachusetts although the federal government is working hard to reverse that and prevent it from happening elsewhere in the country. Robyn Ochs and her partner were among the early couples to take advantage of the new right to marry.

I am excited about going off to Minneapolis to attend the Eighth International Conference on Bisexuality. I will be setting up a table for SBWN materials and attending workshops and socializing with other bisexual people for four days! I wasn't able to go to a bi conference last year and I missed my yearly dose of inspiration, education, networking and fun.

I am a little nervous about flying, not about the flight, but about going through airport security and having to wait in long lines. I don't fly very often and I am always worried that I will forget to take my Swiss army knife and my nail clippers out of my pouch and put them into my luggage to be checked. I have had the knife since my first trip to Europe back in 1974. I bought the knife to take along on the trip and have carried it with me ever since. I would be reluctant to have to give it up because I forgot to put it back into my suitcase.

I attended a workshop about Fetishism at our Sex Positive Community Center. Midori is a great speaker and illustrates her words with a great deal of body language. She was wearing a skintight red and black latex dress and it was difficult to take my eyes off of her. At one point when she was doing a little audience participation, one person called out, “Can you stop moving?” and we laughed and could understand, it was too hard to concentrate when she was in motion. Midori covered the history of fetish, the definition which varies by time, place and culture, the origins of some of her personal fetishes, and shared some stories of her own adventures. She asked the audience questions and answered many and she gave us a stunning demonstration of 'aural sex' illustrating with a leather glove. She finished with a demonstration of rope bondage with a willing 'boy' that involved leather boots and seven inch high heels and licking. I would be surprised if there was a dry seat in the house.

The SBWN support group meeting schedule is being interrupted by some holidays in the next few months so keep checking the web site for exact meeting dates.

Cyprienne

Read any good books this summer?

Our next issue willbe highlighting books we've read and liked, so feel free to send in your recommendations and reviews. LGBT-themed books are certainly welcome, but so are reviews and recommendations of whatever reading has captivated, educated, entertained or delighted you.

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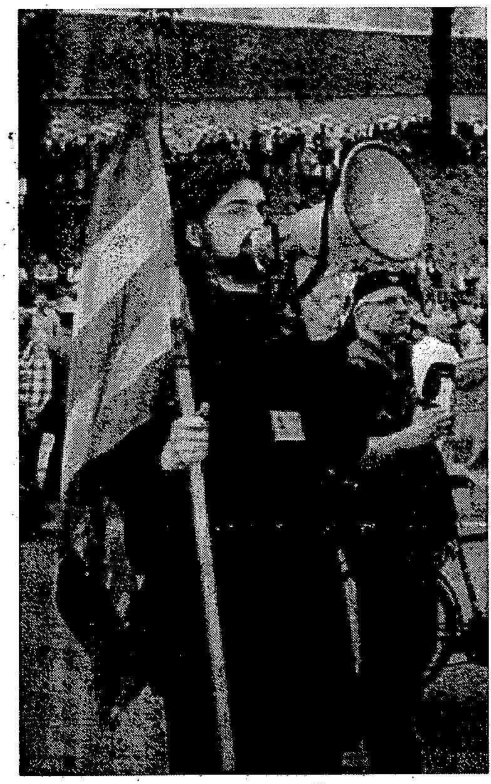
around in shock, my face agape in complete astonishment. I watched him as he broke the sign on his knee and threw it on the ground.

Instantly I felt violated. I couldn't hold back my emotions and began to cry. I buried my head in the shoulder of a very good friend of mine, a fellow bi woman named Sam who I met through a study abroad program. At the time I was frustrated with my tears. I didn't want him to see what he'd done, that he'd gotten the better of me. I didn't want to give him the satisfaction, but I simply didn't have it in me. I felt like the sign I'd held symbolized my identity, my freedom, my ideology – my everything that makes me anything – and he snatched it away from me in the mere blink of an eye.

People came up to me from every direction wanting to know what happened and wanting to comfort me, all of them speaking in a language other than English. Despite feeling paralyzed by emotion, I somehow blurted out in between sobs that I couldn't understand them. They seemed to know that I couldn't say any more than that. Those that spoke English told me that I'd be okay. Those that didn't put their hands on my back, reaching out to me in the only way that they could without being able to communicate with me verbally.



A wonderful woman appeared from the crowd with my pathetic-looking sign, smashed and torn, the wooden handle broken off. She handed it to me with a look of concern on her face. I could see that she felt my pain, that her heart was sinking with every tear streaming down my face. I said thank you over and over, not even sure if she could understand what I was saying given the language barrier. She nodded and smiled at me, her warmth hugging me without actually hugging me.

Overcome by their selflessness and empathy, the tears kept flowing, although this time the tears didn't come from vulnerability; they came from strength in a shared identity and through the empathy of my new friends. Suddenly it all turned on like a light bulb in my mind. I wasn't there to beg for acceptance. I didn't want compassion from the other side, for my poor lifestyle that they thought I'd been infected with like some disease. I was there to seek respect. I wanted them to understand that although we were queer, we were also human beings.

A woman from a newspaper came up to me, eager to catch my emotion on tape. She spoke in Polish. I couldn't understand her, so I told her that I didn't understand and walked on, still feeling overwhelmed. I calmed down and noticed that media were everywhere as were the police. The police were incredibly objective, which surprised me at the time. As long as people didn't get violent they allowed each side to express themselves. I was later informed that only a week prior at the European Economic Forum in Warsaw the police hadn't been as objective. Given that this was Poland's first gay-rights demonstration, media presence was blanketing and seemed to make them more aware of their actions.

I realize that in describing those that were there to protest gay-rights as the 'opposition' that I'm creating a picture of an enemy, an opponent, a group to be defeated, and I felt that way to a degree, but at the same time as I stood there observing them, I couldn't help but notice our similarities. I couldn't help but think that we were all going to go out for a meal after the march, that we were all going to go home and sleep with similar pillows and in similar beds. I now realize that our only difference was ideology – shaped by different experiences, by different cultures, by different upbringings – each one legitimate in different ways and for different reasons.

For me the most significant part of the march was intolerance. The so-called opposition wasn't tolerant of our differences in ideology, and that was why we were there. I felt like that was the whole point of the march. They did what they needed to do. They stood up for their ideas and so did we. The way they chose to exhibit them, though, made me sad. It made me realize that the same intolerance that existed during the holocaust and that perpetuated slavery still exists today, and not only in forms of blatant prejudice, but in subtle forms as well. It's the same intolerance that creates class struggle and that perpetuates inequality. It's the same intolerance that people exhibit when they judge others because they are different, when they judge them because they don't understand them, because they fear them. Fear turns into hate and it affects everyone. It hurts everyone.

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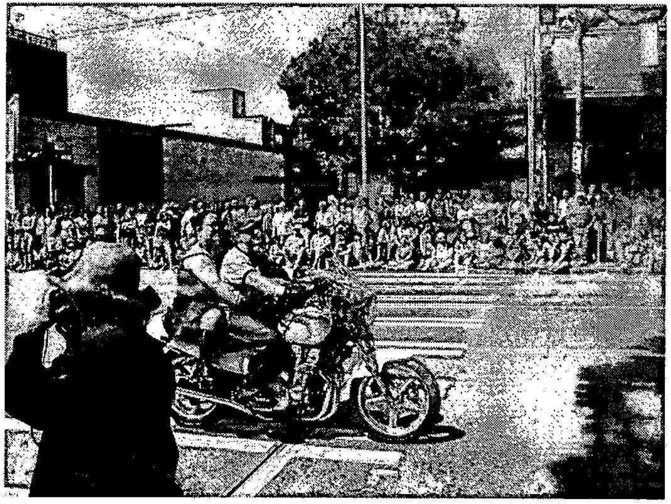
Important Last Minute Decisions
By Diana

I only made the decision to go to pride 30 minutes before we left the house. I poured myself into the car at 8:30 am to meet others for breakfast at Charlie's. We set up camp along the side walk and watched hawk-eyed for something entertaining. The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence always amaze me, a bride and a few beauty queens came but overall it seemed tame this year.

I have done more than my share in years past and felt like being a spectator this year. I choose between two groups of friends huddled a block apart. After two hours of waiting to cheer on SBWN I realized that the softball friends I was spending the majority of my time with were all lesbian. My partner and I are on different teams and hence I have twice the fun of coming out as often as possible. Even on the last day I was declaring I was not lesbian to one of my team mates. I let her be confused for a while then clarified I was bisexual. "Same thing" she claimed. "No, no it's not but thanks for playing" was my reply.

Up until noon it was a party instead of a political statement. I wore my SBWN t-shirt to breakfast and told them what the 5 foot double triangles meant and then chided them for not wearing political t-shirts to the rally. You can't take a sports dyke anywhere without a Nike shirt on.

I saw several friends among the dykes on bikes, took pictures of the drag queens, collected condoms and cake from the "let them eat cake float" and then suddenly I said to Dorothy that I was heading out to find SBWN to march. I back tracked several blocks hoping to find them in motion but instead they were still at the staging area. I said hello to everyone, took some pictures found a bathroom and waited to march.



Off we headed into the first turn on Broadway and our group was about 10 people (I didn't really count) and before two blocks we were nearly 15 with the addition of an entire family! By the end we swelled to 28 people! Another friend showed up about two blocks in and that's when things got really interesting. We were marching in a political parade and there we were catching up on each other's lives, nearly oblivious to the people periodically cheering for us. Why pay attention when you can walk with your tribe, talk about feminism and changing the world?

About half way along the route of the parade I saw 2-3 groups of my friends. My softball team was cheering me on as I passed Olive Street followed by my partner's team just a half block further. My partner hadn't seen me in 90 minutes and delighted me with a greeting. Her teammates periodically ran out to give me hugs. I thought it was strange but what the hell! I looked popular. We took pictures, I got a kiss from a long blond curly haired babe in a sleek leather bra whom I took home later <wink> and there I was making a huge political statement aimed right at every lesbian I have spent the last 6 months with. It was SO COOL. They were happy to see me, I was out as bisexual, they cheered me on and I nailed the point home all just by marching with SBWN.

FOR U CHOICE
Seattle Bisexual Women's Network

Two blocks later I departed and fell back to my group. I was satisfied I did my part for the day. I never found the SBWN booth area in my brief walk past the booths but I was there and I was out and proud. It was more enlightening for me this year then it has been in past years. All I could think is that THEY CHEERED!!!! Ok, sometimes it was meant for Planned Parenthood but sometimes it was for US!!! You should experience what it's like when a bisexual supporter suddenly sees us walk by and starts clapping, pointing and yelling like a madwoman. It's great!

I hope you all made it to pride this year and soaked in the beautiful sunshine. Thank you all for doing the booth and organizing the group. It's so important to stand up and be counted.

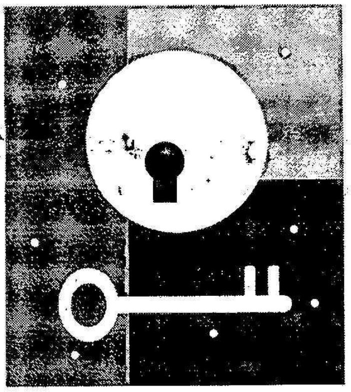
Womanspeak

By L. Hake

As the train rocked gently to and fro, I sat across from my girlfriend and watched suburban Prague (Czech Republic) fly past the window. Had I not known where I was, I might have thought I was in Lynnwood or Tukwilla. The sun shone on green lawns and modest houses, and cars made their way through busy intersections. Occasionally my feet would touch my girlfriends' or our eyes would meet and we'd smile. We were not overly affectionate, but neither were we withholding. She had been there for a month (she was studying for a quarter and I was visiting her for a week) and had learned that homosexuality might get a blatant stare, but the threat of violence was less than in the US. We didn't push it, but we didn't hide it. Couldn't, really.

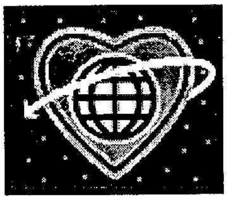
An elderly, distinguished woman sitting next me tried to speak to me in Czech. We explained (in our own pathetic Czech) that we didn't know her language, and asked if she knew English. She did not, and we had a brief moment of silence. Then the elderly woman proceeded to speak again, in Czech, and talked to us for another half hour. We tried to keep up with her, using a Czech phrase book and dictionary, but it was hopeless. She didn't seem to care. She talked and talked, in her frail, gentle voice. After a while I just listened to the old woman, offering all the nonverbal signals that seem to communicate as much as words. Her eyes were kind, her words intent, her hands gesturing occasionally as she spoke.

Sitting across the aisle was a young woman, perhaps college age, watching us, smiling. We'd been told that young people, especially students, often knew English. Several times we asked for help from her, but she just shrugged and smiled apologetically. Although she couldn't help, she kept smiling at us and seemed like she wanted to engage in some way.



Eventually we arrived at our station, and we bid the old woman farewell. As we stood on the platform studying our maps, we noticed the same college-age woman we'd seen on the train now about 20 feet away, still smiling at us. She seemed to want something from us, or want to give us something. We waved and tried to talk to her, but couldn't understand each other. Her smile was friendly and expectant and familiar, but the language barrier kept us from communicating further, and we parted ways. My girl and I walked on in thoughtful silence. When we finally spoke, we realized we'd reached the same conclusion about the young woman: She was queer, and she recognized that we were too, and realized that the three of us were part of a larger community. That was why her smile was familiar, we knew her even though we'd never met. That was why she seemed to both offer and expect something, we were family, and that's what families do.

Both conversations that took place that day, with the older and with the younger woman, spoke volumes about the depth and breadth of communication that can transgress age, country, and language. I felt connected to both women, allied with them, caring about them, even though I don't know their names, their histories, or even what they said to me.



Czeching out the Queers in Prague

By L. Hake

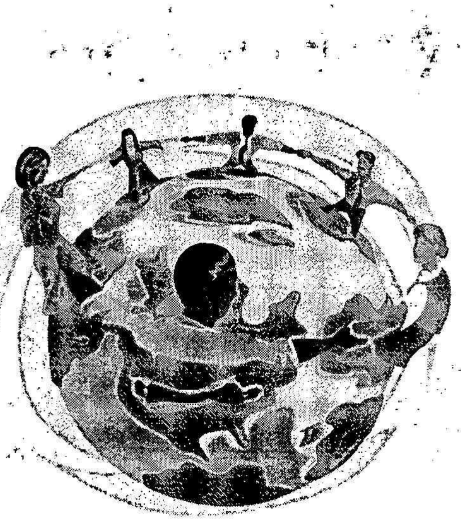
One week in Prague, Czech Republic, is not near enough to learn the queer culture there. But the week I spent there in May did give me a superficial glance at the subtle differences and similarities between the US and this former Communist block country.

GLBT folk are not obvious on the streets of this city. I never once saw a same sex couple holding hands. There certainly were no pierced dykes with shaved heads on the subways and gay boys were not carrying on at sidewalk bistros. Gay bars weren't open evenings at the beginning of the week. One lesbian bar we tried to go to closed early for the evening because there were no customers that night, and another had closed down permanently. Queers were there, I have no doubt, but they were tucked away.

I was able to meet a few of them at a party thrown by a friend of my girlfriend (whom I was visiting while she was studying there). They were what I was used to meeting in Seattle: progressive, liberal, androgynous, femme, butch, transgendered, polyamorous and monogamous, with varying levels of education and a disproportionate number employed in social service or involved in political action. They told me that Czechs were tolerant on the street to queers, but there were no laws protecting them, no employment non-discrimination acts, no same-sex adoption rights, no domestic partnerships.

Attempts at change were having an effect, but progress moved glacially. Old queers generally did not get involved in social change, the oppressive days of communism had taught them to hide and trust no one. So there was little mentoring, few seasoned leaders to bring history forward. The younger generation had energy, but they were up against decades of social control in a society that had not acknowledged the existence of queers and where public protest of any sort had lead to government harassment, imprisonment, and death.

One advantage they seemed to have over the US was that Communism is secular. Religion plays a much smaller part in Czech culture. The Christian Right simply is not the threatening phenomenon it is here. So resistance is not as passionate or intense, and the queer activists I met there seemed to feel that close-minded people could be reasoned with and influenced.



One striking and ironic difference between the visibility of queers in Prague and in the US was the frequent use of girl-on girl images in advertising. While I never saw two women together on the street, they *were* on billboards, often nude and erotically intertwined, selling everything from shoes to alcohol to bathing suits. I've noticed this from time to time in American advertising, but here it is not nearly as prevalent (except in pornography).

So there were mixed messages. This did not keep my girlfriend and I from holding hands along the many cobblestone streets. I'm not sure what the Czechs thought of us, if anything, as we strolled across the Charles Bridge arm in arm. Perhaps they simply dismissed us as another pair of odd Americans, not one of them. Maybe they wished we weren't there, or weren't so obvious. Perhaps, even, they were indifferent. But what I am grateful for is that they were polite and tolerant, something that I wish would catch on a little more in America.

On Women and Civility

By Carole E Trainor

"It is true that as long as women do not enjoy rights, they will not reach civil adulthood as women " Luce Irigaray

I began this piece thinking I could break down some of the more complexed notions I came across during an intense reread of Luce Irigaray's *Thinking The Difference*, but I've since changed my mind. The task is monumental. I have decided, instead, to talk about what it might mean for us, as women, in concrete terms, to be denied civil rights. I come to this new understanding only after stumbling back across (and being inspired twice over by) Irigaray's Essay on *Civil Rights and Responsibilities For The Two Sexes.*

I open the largest dictionary I can find here this morning and look up the word, "civil." The New Penguin English Dictionary has this to say: *"1. adequately courteous and polite...2. of citizens... 3. of, or involving the general public as distinguished from the special..4. relating to private rights as distinct from criminal proceeding...* It isn't much help.

I try looking to have the term *civil rights* defined for me, instead. The Penguin English Dictionary has this to say on the topic of civil rights. It means: *civil liberties esp those of status equality between races or groups.* I need more. The dictionary definitions are highly inadequate. I need a concrete theoretical definition. My intention (a few minutes back) was to argue for a new kind of civil rights movement for women here in Canada. I decide, instead, on a kind of *mapping out* of civil rights violations. I do this in hope of bringing intellectual clarity to the more nebulous areas of these kinds of Human Rights violations. In time, we will need more theories on women and civility – theories that can be propped up with wasp stinging clarity if we are to rest on them and ride them for any amount of distance. In the meantime, we need only look and see:

What does a civil violation look like? Do we know this to be the case? How is a civil violation experienced, from the inside (subjectively) by women here in Canada, and how does a civil violation appear to others when looking at it from the outside? It's to this kind of enquiry I dedicate my morning.

It's my guess that most people in my city have never entertained the notion of women's civil rights for any substantial amount of time, and like me, probably have no real working definition, even, of the word, "civil." I'm not so sure that the most educated among us could offer up (with any real comfort or certainty) the full dimensionalities of that which we might want to say constitutes or doesn't constitute a *civil right.* Nevertheless, I am eager. I forge ahead - coming to you honest, clean and true to my work and to my world.

* A woman knows her civil rights have been violated when she speaks of her desires, her dreams, her aspirations, her theoretical perspectives, and nobody cares to hear, support or encourage her in her attempts to make significant, worthwhile contributions to her community.

*A woman knows her civil rights have been being violated when she is seen as being *off topic* for not servicing the needs, the objectives or the mandates of others.

* A woman's knows her civil rights have been violated whenever she's told she needs to go for a walk, take a bath, take "meds" in order to forget about the human rights violations she suffers on a regular basis. A woman knows her civil rights are being violated whenever her response to indignation or unethical treatment is perceived by others as hostile, angry – as irrational "ranting."

*A woman knows her civil rights have been violated when, no matter what she does for the love of her community; regardless of how hard she labours for the love of her community, her efforts go unacknowledged, uncompensated, (unseen, even) while the benefits of her work are quickly and eagerly scooped up – absorbed into the non -reality of a greedy, competitive economy that cannot and does not serve her.

*A woman knows her civil rights have been violated whenever her local universities offer courses on gender oppression and women's issues without any real regard for the concrete conditions of most women's lives – without the consent of most women to do so - without the permission of most women, to (on behalf of all women) proceed in excluding the most marginalized of women for the sake of empowering some women under the guise of educating the rest of the women about the majority of women.

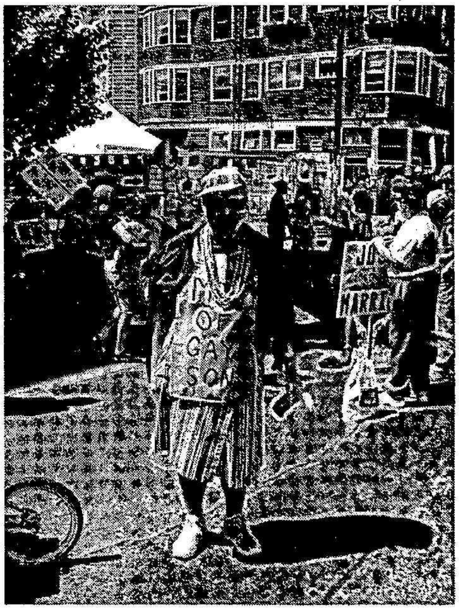
* A woman knows her civil rights are being violated whenever she sits in a university classroom and challenges inaccurate representations of her gender, race, socioeconomic status while those around her act as though they see absolutely no merit in her angry tangent of an argument.

* A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time she's given a grade that reflects somebody else's jealously or resentment of her rather than the quality of her monumental effort, her passionate commitment - her serious, methodical-intellectual processes.

*A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time another person automatically assumes themselves to have greater knowledge on any given subject while in her presence, and proceeds to speak to her as though she is an uninformed, just-born-yesterday child in need of extensive instruction.

*A woman knows her civil rights are being violated whenever she is mistreated or punished for being herself or for speaking her mind openly and forcefully. A woman knows her civil rights are being violated whenever newspapers and magazines refuse to publish her works because of the *controversial* woman-loving nature of her writing.

*A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time she stands up to oppose violence and war and is responded to by a brutal play-by play of it's horrors on the very TV screens, magazines and newspapers *she* purchases to ensure the successful production of an economy that cannot and does not serve her..



*A woman knows that her civil rights are being violated everyday that her community places no value on her domestic labour and amplifies the value of paid work. A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time other people steal her child rearing ideas, her creative interventions, her disciplinary measures, her methodical means for healing and nurturing - every time big business steals her trustworthy image, her recipes, her hospitality - her face - and claims it as their own.

*A woman knows her civil rights are being violated everyday that she can not stake claim to years of domestic work on a professional resume – to everyday that she cannot enjoy the same measure of financial credit obtained by those who got paid for not caring for her children in the home. A woman knows her civil rights are being violated whenever we accept as *unproblematic* the measure of unpaid labour women do without acknowledgement, compensation or respectful recognition.

*A woman knows her civil rights are being violated by society's notions that earning money is what constitutes "work," - that the owning of property has far greater value than the pursuit of Love between mothers and daughters; love between mothers and sons; more value than the intimate love shared by lovers, even – more value than life itself.

*A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time a doctor, a therapist, a teacher, a counselor assumes expertise over her life and experience: ..A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time she is deceived, dismissed, exploited, preached at, spoken about as though she has no innate capacity to formulate thoughts or create solutions for herself. A woman knows her civil rights are being violated every time she's referred to as too old, too ugly, too fat, too disgusting, too haggard, too queer, too wrinkled, too experienced, too "cocky", too vain, or too opinionated.

* A woman knows her civil rights are being violated everyday that she is expected to raise children in poverty, only to be told, after her children have eaten (and she hasn't) that she's no good with money.

* A woman's civil rights are being violated every time she is exposed to pornographic images of female people depicted as objects whose degradation and humiliation is sexually arousing to others, and highly profitable to the economy that cannot and does not serve her.

* A woman's civil rights are violated every time polished commercial images of male dominated love are sold to her on the television screen or on the pages of her magazines regardless of the specificity of her intimate desires.

*A woman's civil rights are violated every time depictions of gay men's love includes (for effect) small, minimized images of women's body parts in the margins of glossy magazines. (painted toe nails, the ankle, the high heel...)

The ordinary and consistent violation of women's civil rights, in these times, indicates that women, continue, (in this year of 2004) to live out their human existence as people who have not yet achieved fill civil equality or full civil status – people, for whom the purpose of life is to uphold and sustain a better quality of life for others than they, themselves, may ever, in their lifetimes know.

[Thank you to Luce Irigaray for the theoretical framework; for the fireworks of notions; for the inspiration - for bidding me sleep under the same sky]

Carole E Trainor is the editor of the feminist compilation, "And I Will Paint The Sky." Her works have been featured in various newspapers, magazines and journals throughout Canada, The United States and The United Kingdom. She is a part time university instructor pursuing doctoral work in the area of Critical Educational Theory. She lives in Nova Scotia, Canada.

* * *

My Activism

Part Two

By Cyprienne

I discovered that I was pregnant right after I got my acceptance to the University of Massachusetts. I decided that I wanted to buck the masses and prepared for a home birth. I took classes, read books, prepared myself for skirting the edge of legality in Massachusetts to try to give my baby a natural and safe entry into this world.

Alas, it was not to be. Due to a condition called placenta previa I was forced to give birth in a hospital emergency situation and to have a caesarean section. The day after the birth a woman came into my room and gave me a birth certificate information form to fill out. I wrote in the name I had chosen for my child as well as the birth parents information and turned it in. The next day she returned with an official form put together from my info. All references to my child's father had been removed since we were not married. In Massachusetts at that time, if there was an 'illegitimate birth' then no identifying information would be included about the father by the county clerks whose job it was to record officially all births in the state. I refused to sign the form and figured I would deal with it later, after all I was recovering from major abdominal surgery and significant loss of blood plus a baby in intensive care. It was a week or so after I left the hospital that I called to see about fixing up the birth certificate and was told that the hospital had already filed my baby's birth certificate, either forging my signature or just sending it without. I ended up calling Legal Aid and eventually was directed to the Attorney General's office. They listened to my story and told me they just happened to be assembling a class action suit against the county clerks for creating their own 'law' in the recording of birth names chosen by parents. It was the clerks refusing to record the parents choices that was the problem not the laws of the state. I joined the suit and when it was won, my son's name was corrected on his birth certificate. It wasn't until the next year that a ruling came down to allow the father's information to be on the birth certificate if an unmarried couple both wrote letters stating that was their desire. This was not retroactive, so my son's birth certificate brands him as illegitimate to anyone who is aware of the Massachusetts custom.

The unexpected surgical birth caused me to become aware of an organization called C/Sec. I talked to some members on the telephone and then attended a number of their meetings and became educated about a process they were lobbying for called V-BAC (vaginal birth after caesarean). They were gathering scientific information, medical study results, tales by their members and approaching local doctors with demands to end the 'once a caesarean, always a caesarean' rule that most OB/GYN doctors practicing in the USA foisted on all women with previous surgical deliveries.

I also joined Homebirth and became an active member, taking care of their correspondence, office, teaching classes to expectant parents intending a home birth, lecturing on home birth, and training to be a lay-midwife. I attended four births, two successful home births and two with complications that we transported to hospitals for surgical births. I attended a midwifery conference in El Paso with many other home birth advocates, activists and practitioners. I went back to U-Mass and did a lecture on home birth for students from the women's studies program.

One month before giving birth my partner and I had moved into a rent controlled apartment in Cambridge. I stayed in that apartment for ten years, periodically fighting with the landlord over tenants rights issues. My downstairs neighbors and I took our landlord to 'court' over water accessibility (we didn't have enough due to clogged pipes), for vermin infestation, access to the basement, and over their trying to get the building declassified as a rent controlled property (so the landlords could charge us a lot more for our rent). We won on every count except the access to basement issue. The landlord built a wall to cut off our access to the shared laundry facilities claiming that we had abused the machines and it wasn't a right we had in our lease anyway.

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For more information

Contact North Bi Northwest

One Saturday in early fall, I wandered over to my local women's book store, New Words, and discovered a crafts market happening in their basement room. I asked who was in charge and found out the requirements to participate. I had wandered in to their second weekend event and so became a member of the Women's Craft Market almost at the beginning. I rented a table space almost every day that was available for a very modest fee and set up with my weaving, note cards and painted clothing. I attended the monthly meetings and became a volunteer helping to keep the cooperative going. Over ten years, I served as a 'day manager' (women who was in charge of one day's market), helped rewrite and create documents for the group such as selling guidelines, membership lists, calendars and space layout diagrams, served as secretary at some meetings, helped purchase equipment (tables we rented otuat the weekend markets), helped with advertising and with organizing of events at other venues.

Hand Woven

Scarves – Shawls – Vests – Ponchos – Blankets
By Cyprienne

Visit Her Web-site
@
www.loomwoven.com

In the early 80's I started attending Wednesday night meetings of a group called Introductory at the Women's Center in Cambridge. It was my introduction to feminist discussion groups. The topic was different every week and attendance could be anywhere from five to twenty-five. After faithfully attending nearly every meeting for three months I was approached by one of the organizers and asked to attend a meeting of the Core group who ran Introductory. I agreed and had no idea what I was in for. It still amazes me that after that incredible meeting two of us actually decided to become Core members. I was expecting to be there at most two hours. The meeting was a typical feminist processing session and went on for over four hours! When asked to suggest future topics, I spoke up and offered 'bisexuality' and was roundly voted down with comments of 'no one will be interested in that topic'. Later that year they let me put it in as a topic and we had such a large turnout for the topic that we barely fit into our usual large room, nearly thirty women showed up! After that meeting I followed a small group outside and we ended up deciding to form a CR (consciousness raising) group to continue to discuss bisexuality. I procured some booklets from the Women's Center about how to start and run a CR group and passed them out. We started with twelve members and usually had at least six at each meeting. We met in our homes, taking turns and had lively discussions about our interests and concerns with bisexuality. There were the usual disagreements over including males in the group. Some of us wanted to stay an all female group and we did. We lasted nearly a year before disbanding.

...To be continued

Pride 2004
Subject: Reflections on Pride

What a day! As a first time marcher, and newish member of SBWN, I couldn't imagine a better experience. We had excellent weather, a very supportive, enthusiastic crowd, and behind our banner a large, diverse group of women-including some men and children (with due credit given to Bi Net for marching with us) amounting to about 19 in total give or take a few joining and/or exiting throughout the march.

The aspect of marching I enjoyed most was the mixture of positive feelings it evoked. First and foremost a feeling of pride within myself, proud for being brave enough to stand up and openly declare my bisexuality. Also, a reassuring sense of solidarity and unity within my group which was emphasized by the friendly, pleasant atmosphere we created and marched in. Not to mention joy-plain and simple-resulting from a combination of delight and surprise to see all the waving hands & flags (plus beautiful women-who knew Seattle had so many?) and to hear all the claps & cheers from the bystanders on Broadway as we walked by "you guys ROCK", besides getting a chance to meet new people and growing closer to other SBWN members.

The strongest feeling however, is hard to describe, but encompasses being a part of something that is bigger than me, our group, or the Seattle Pride March. It is a feeling that has come about by playing an active role in society and becoming a citizen who is involved with a movement that promotes positive LGBT awareness, demands attention, expects respect, and is in the process of gaining equal civil rights. Ultimately, it is enormously satisfying to know that you took part in an event stating to our city, our nation and even the world that "I am a bisexual, and accept myself". Hopefully someday our friends (and everyone...) in their hetero and homosexual spheres will come to acknowledge and accept us too!

An amazing invent indeed, I'm glad it's over though-and will watch myself next year, as now I'm keenly aware of the work involved with volunteering for Pride, especially booth set-up and take down!

Jessica

Comments After Meetings

7 March 2004: Activism
"I am really glad that I came to this meeting. Very lively discussion about gay marriage and activism."

"Very interesting group, great topics full of passion, lots of fun for my first meeting."

2 May 2004 Breast Health
"Great job Sheri! Good handouts, the ever popular laminated self breast exam cards for hanging in the shower are nice and colourful."

"Sheri is such a goddess! Thanks for the tit tests. Hot girls are so motivating."

"This is a really important subject for women and I really needed to hear about this. Keep up the good work, Sheri."

"A very fun evening. I am really glad, I came and I love talking about breasts! I hope we can all learn to love ourselves and our breasts every month!"

"Lots of great information. I learned a lot."

"So much good info, so much I didn't know about breast health. This was my first meeting and I'm so glad I made it through the door. Thanks for the supportive, positive atmosphere. :-)"

16 May 2004 Pride Planning
"A great meeting. Good food, chili, yum. Loved the enthusiasm and the willingness to volunteer. Newsletter stuffing went very fast!"

"Fantastic night! Everyone was so helpful and we got so much done."

"Great meeting. We accomplished a lot and had fun doing it."

"Lovely fruit, ensemble, people and atmosphere."

* * *

It's a Saucy Summer!

Saucy Dish!
All things sensual and sexy!

This column offers sexuality education and insight into sex positive culture. Information contained within will be bold, opinioned and based on experience and research. Please ask questions about safer sex, our bodies, pleasure, relationships, sexual exploration, sex toys, sexy wear, flirting and more…

Send letters to SBWN Attn: Saucy Dish POB 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle, WA 98113-0645 or email your questions to: saucydish@hotmail.com

Dear Saucy,

I am trying to use safer sex, but am having trouble sticking with it for oral sex. I have tried dental dams and have found them thick enough to significantly reduce sensation, hard to hold onto, and generally cramp my style to the point where it "doesn't do it" for my partner. I don't have a partner in-town I can practice this with regularly and don't want to give up my not all that frequent but enjoyable encounters. I have heard saran wrap doesn't really protect you, as it is porous. What's a girl to do?!?

Struggling with Oral Sex (S.O.S)

Dear S.O.S.

Thank you for the great questions! First, using barriers during oral sex takes practice. Doesn't that sound fun?! I recommend trying safer oral sex with a sense of humor and with an established, willing, and supportive partner. Try using the variety of barriers we have to choose from whether it's a dental dam, a gly-dams [or other dams actually made with sex in mind and therefore are a much bigger thinner latex barrier], a cut open un-lubricated condom, a cut open un-powdered latex glove, and wrap. There are even special garters that will hold dams in place. Plastic wrap is only porous at microwavable temperatures. Check out goodvibrations.com and babeland.com for supplies.

My personal experience is that plastic wrap feels the best and is the easiest to secure. Using a glove I put lube on her, with my non lubricated hand I press a sheet of plastic wrap against her vulva, and lick away pressing into all the crevices so the plastic wrap makes good contact I use lots of saliva and just don't suck uber-hard – you can suck a hole in the plastic wrap if you suck hard enough. The plastic wrap stays in place and I can even slip my lubed gloved hand under it to digitally penetrate or stimulate! In a pinch I use a split glove leaving the thumb in place and cutting the fingers of the glove off and cutting along the pinky side to have a nice sheet of latex and the thumb part to stick my tongue in. I make kits of supplies for myself to use with my partners so everything I need is handy. If I lose my groove dealing with the barriers I stop and reconnect with my partner touching her skin, kissing her, laughing at myself and even at times smooth out those transitions with some sex talk!

Honestly, I think with practice and a commitment to your health and that of your partner(s) safer oral sex can be stuck to and very hot!

Sticky summer wishes,
Saucy Dish

Special thanks to the technical advisors for Saucy Dish!

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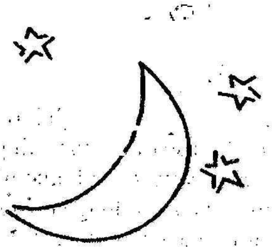
The "WuWu" Page



...for entertainment only...

Horoscopes

Leo Jul 22 to Aug 23

Key word: Simplicity – Look around you. It's never as complicated as it seems at first glance. Give your environment a chance to settle. Complications will iron themselves out if you give them just a little time.

- Aaah! You have suddenly found yourself in the lap of luxury. Appreciate it but don't forget to squirrel away nuts for the long winter ahead. You find yourself thinking of people and places from the distant past. Remember also the difficulties you endured. Learn from them and look forward toward a brighter future. In front of you is an adventure not yet discovered. The past is the past.

Virgo Aug 23 to Sept 23

Key word: Strength – You are strong. You may find that others do not recognize it because you are flexible. You bend but you do not break. It is in this flexibility that you find your strength. Ignore those who do not see this. They are inflexible and it will be their own undoing.

- Oh! You have discovered your own resources within you! Congratulations! Don't worry. These assets are not the kind that can be taken from you. You will soon find a partner to plan your future with. Together you create an unstoppable renewed enthusiasm in each of your lives. This enthusiasm will not burn out but it will soften as you become more accustom to one another's life force. Rest assured it will remain a prominent aspect of your relationship and be a shared asset well into your future.

Libra Sept 23 to Oct 23

Key word: Adventure – These next few months will bring new and wonderful concepts to the forefront for you and yours. Take advantage of the experience and learn all that is possible. Recalling this time will be useful next spring.

- You have been in a position to stand in judgment over others. Take care for the way you judge is also judged. Do not succumb to the corruption that comes with power. It does not become you. This position you have found yourself in is thankless, to say the least, but the task must be fulfilled. Do so with honor and dignity.

Scorpio Oct 23 to Nov 22

Key word: Truth- What is your truth? What is the truth of those you are in conflict with? Ask yourself both questions when you are toe to toe with your perceived enemy. You are likely to discover that you have more in common than you believe.

- Defending your position can be a cold and lonely task. Make sure it is worth it. The opinion you held years ago, may not hold water now. Reassess your values, for your own sake, before you make any major decisions. What you are about to do cannot be undone. Lay down your arms and negotiate while issues are not so heated. This is a rare opportunity. Seize it!

Sagittarius Nov 22 to Dec 21

Key word: Release – You have been holding onto so many slights and indignities from you past. Now is the time to let go and start fresh. You won't regret dropping such a heavy load.

- The finances are slowly picking up for you this season. There are bits of information about to be revealed that will help you build your bank account. This is truly a case of working smarter, not harder. Go for it! But use caution.

Capricorn Dec 21-Jan 20

Key word: Birth – Something new is trying to come out. Be it a project or a new side of yourself; make room, as this is a natural process. Enjoy it!

- You are given the opportunity to recover something lost. Savor this time. Appreciate this thing as you did not in the past. Part of the loss and recovery is so that you will see how much it means to you to have it in your life. You are blessed.

Aquarius Jan 20 to Feb 18

Key word: All that is – You are very close to discovering a spirituality that is very new to you. Or you can go on trudging through life will no real direction. The choice is yours. It is a real and serious one.

- You are looking into your future. What is it that you see? Don't be so smitten by the reflection of yourself in the crystal ball that you forget how your actions will affect others. It's not just luck. Your actions; cause and effect, are laying the brick work for the path upon which you walk toward your destiny. Use good and fair judgment. Fortune is riddled with karma.

Pisces Feb 18 to Mar 20

Key word: Humor- Laugh it off, my friend. You will see that a good sense of humor will get you far these days. Those who might otherwise be fierce with anger will laugh it off too. You will make good long lasting friendships with your sense of humor in the next few months.

-Old ideas are becoming obsolete as new paths reveal themselves. Don't be afraid to let go of the old and reach for the new. You are the master of your future now. Remember; once you have reached the "top" you are still one of us, and you could not have gotten there alone.

Aries Mar 20 to April 20

Key word: Spontaneity – Nope; you don't like to be spontaneous. Try it…Just a little. This season is a good time to get your feet wet…while there are people around you who can, and will catch you if you fall.

- Oh Geez! There you go again! -Looking at the grass on the other side of the fence. Mow your won lawn for a change and see how green your grass will become! Funny, how strange your own home has become. Look at it in a new light and take advantage of this opportunity to take a fresh approach. You will find yourself all the richer for remaining in touch with what you already have when the summer is over.

Taurus Apr 20 to May 21

Key word: Courage -So you think it's time to leap? I see you looking and looking and looking behind you. What have you forgotten? …Nothing but the courage to take that next step.

- You have a nagging feeling that the life you are leading is not quite what it was meant to be. You have plenty to be thankful for but you still feel empty and lost. Take stock. Decide what you really want. Assess. Make your decision based on rational factors. Be realistic. Know yourself well enough to determine what is truly best for you. Taking the time to properly judge your situation before you make a major change will put you in a very good position by the end of this season. Good luck!

Gemini May 21 to Jun 21

Key word: Compassion – Sometimes you forget that you know how others will feel if you step on them. Now is not the time to shut them out. You will benefit from listening to your heart when dealing with interpersonal relationships.

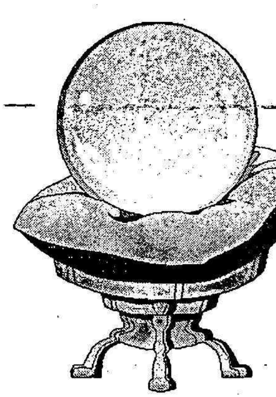
- You have an unspoken partnership. Most recently, it would seem that that partnership is waning. Don't be surprised when it takes on a new exuberance later this month. Life has been unjust in the past for you and this relationship. It's your patience that has seen the relationship through. You will not have to wait much longer. Much of you past difficulty is about to be alleviated.

Cancer Jun 21 to Jul 22

Key word: Openness- Being slightly more available to your loved ones will help you to understand your current position in life. Listen to them and to yourself when you are with them. Be open to what you are hearing.

- A time for celebration is upon you and those close to you. You may opt to celebrate from a distance, because you will need to remain in your own state of being to complete a task. This is fine. Be sure to let your friends know that it is not the company but the task at hand that keeps you away. Soon you will see with clarity the long suffered results of past errors. Studying what you see in depth will help you not only in correcting these errors; but also in diverting future disasters. This is a learning experience. Forgo the cash payment, and the benefits will reveal themselves more readily.

Questions for the Psychic



Dear Sister Faith,

I have been without a partner for several years and recently met a man who wants to get more involved with me. Is it a good time for me to proceed in getting closer? I am a Leo if that is important. I don't know his sign.

Wondering

Dear "Wondering",

Are you listening to your heart? I believe you're not. Why not? I sense that in the past when you have followed your heart and been burned. Am I getting warm? Take into consideration the fact that you have had to learn lessons in past relationships in order to fulfill your karma. Often our hearts draw us to relationships that are seemingly bad, because there is a lesson we need to learn or a karmic tie that needs to be satisfied. As we get older, we are less drawn to relationships that are designed to balance karma. The information and experience we have acquired from those karma generated entanglements prepare us for the better and richer relationships of our maturity. Don't keep kicking yourself (or your heart) for making bad choices in the past. Think of all the things you know now about relationships. Imagine what it would be like to have to do that learning at this time in your life. Kick back and enjoy a new relationship if you want it. Follow your heart. It will take you where you need to be, at the time when you most need to be there.

Wishing you universal love and happiness,
Sister Faith

Calendar

Seattle Bisexual Women's Network offers support and discussion groups at the Seattle LGBT Community Center. For schedule updates and other events, please call our phone line at (206)517-7767, or visit our website:

http://www.geocities.com/sbwn/.

SBWN group meetings are typically held on the first and third Sunday of each month. When attending support group meetings, please refrain from wearing perfumes or other scented products for the comfort of all.

Schedule of Meetings

Sunday, August 1st, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Summer Reading! Bring a book to share and discuss.

Sunday, August 15th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Social/Potluck/Open. Theme: Sexy foods. 6:30 to PM Bring sensual and sexy foods.

Sunday, September 5th: No meeting—holiday weekend.

Sunday, September 19th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Bisexuality and Feminism. How do they relate?

Sunday, October 3rd, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Flirting Workshop! Tips and fun exercises to augment your talent for flirting.

Sunday, October 17th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Social/Potluck/Open Theme: Harvest Time! Bring your favorite fall foods.

Sunday, November 7th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Gender. Discussion of identity issues, butch/femme, cross-dressing and more.

Sunday, November 21st, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Family and Holidays.

Sunday, December 5th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Spirituality.

Sunday, December 19th, 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Social/Potluck. Theme: Holiday foods.

Local Groups

Seattle Bisexual Women's Network
PO Box 30645, Seattle, WA 98113-0645.
http://www.geocities.com/sbwn/
E-mail: sbwn@hotmail.com

Seattle LGBT Community Center
The Center's mission is to create a meeting place for the LGBT community to grow together, increase public understanding, and celebrate our diversity.
1115 East Pike Street
(206) 323-LGBT (5428)
http://www.seattlelgbt.org

Polyfidelity Discussion Group
Support group and community for people in or interested in multipartner relationships. Discussions and literature on responsible non-monogamy, intimate networks, alternative relationships and community. Bi-monthly potluck discussions are held at 5:30 pm at the SPCC (Sex Positive Community Center, aka "The Wet Spot"). 1630 15th Ave W., Seattle, WA. (206) 728-4533.
http://www.scn.org/~spg/index.html

BiNet Seattle
BiNet Seattle is a bisexual non-profit, mixed gender, social and support organization created to foster a visible community for bisexual, bi-curious people, and their partners in the Puget Sound area. http://www.binetseattle.org

Fridays 7:30-9pm: Discussion / Support group meetings for bisexual and bi-curious men and women, their partners and other bi-friendly folk at the Seattle LGBT Community Center.

Lesbian Resource Center
A community–based organization committed to advancing the status of lesbians by combating oppression and promoting empowerment, visibility, and social change. (206) 322-3953.
http://www.lrc.net